network switching node devices.

9. The method as defined in claim 8 wherein the method further comprises integrating the functions of at least two network services in the Open IP Services Platform.

10. The method as defined in claim 9 wherein the method for integrating the functions of at least two network services in an Open IP Services Platform that provides access to a network, said method comprising the steps of:

1) providing a single board computer running an open architecture Operation System, at least two bus connectors coupled to the single board computer, and used for receiving cards that perform network functions, a switch/router board coupled to the single board computer, and a plurality of network ports coupled to the switch/router board; and

2) configuring interconnections between the at least two bus connectors, the switch/router board, and the single board computer by utilizing configuration software that directs a plurality of switches to make physical interconnections within the Open IP Services Platform.

11. The method as defined in claim 10 wherein the method further comprises the step of enabling the Open IP Services Platform to determine a desirable network topology within the Open IP Services Platform for the at least two network functions being performed.

12. The method as defined in claim 11 wherein the method further comprises the step of enabling an administrator to utilize the configuration software to configure individual ports of the Open IP Services Platform.

13. The method as defined in claim 12 wherein the configuration software is able to configure the individual ports of the Open IP Services Platform by selecting a configuration scheme from the group of configuration schemes comprising bandwidth usage, rule sets, trigger points, IP services being performed, and protocol usage.

14. The method as defined in claim 13 wherein the configuration software enables on the fly configuration of the Open IP Services Platform, wherein the Open IP Services Platform is not rebooted in order to effect

desired changes in interconnections.

15. The method as defined in claim 14 wherein the method further comprises the step of enabling a plurality of different network devices to be coupled to the at least two bus connectors, wherein the plurality of different network devices are selected from the group of network devices comprising routers, switches, load balancers, bridges, firewalls, packet shapers, and servers.

16. The method as defined in claim 15 wherein the method further comprises the step of enabling network devices from any vendor to be included in the Open IP Services Platform, wherein memory management prevents any one of the network devices from interfering with operation of any other network device.

17. The method as defined in claim 16 wherein the method further comprises the step of enabling any vendor of the network devices to provide a software module that is utilized by the configuration software to represent and control operation of a network device.